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Abductive Research Strategy (ARS) and the Generation of Grounded Concepts: Two Empirical Examples[1]

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INTRODUCTION

Abductive Research Strategy (ARS) is one distinctive type of qualitative research developed by Blaikie (1993, 2000, 2007, 2010), which refers to the process of constructing theories or typologies that are grounded in everyday activities and in the language and meanings of social actors. This research strategy is associated with Interpretivism and is used to generate social scientific accounts from social actors' accounts. Blaikie developed this research strategy by drawing heavily from the work of social constructionism – such as hermeneutics, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, existential sociology, and even ethnomethodology. The *aim* of this paper is to demonstrate how grounded concepts, in the form of typologies, are generated through the use of abductive logic. While this will be displayed through the use of two empirical examples, one from Malaysia and the other from Australia, it is necessary to, *first*, review the ARS and to illustrate its methods of generating grounded concepts or typologies.

ABDUCTIVE RESEARCH STRATEGY

The idea of abduction, as expounded by Blaikie (1993, 2000, 2004, 2007, 2010), refers to the process of generating social scientific accounts from social actors' accounts.[2] Technical concepts and theories are derived from lay concepts and interpretations of social life. In order to developed this strategy, Blaikie has drawn a great deal on the work of Schütz (1963a, 1963b, 1972, 1976), Weber (1964), Winch (1958), Douglas (1971), Rex (1974) and Giddens (1976, 1979).[3]

The ARS entails ontological assumptions that sees social reality as socially constructed by social actors, where there is no single reality but multiple and changing social realities. Its epistemological assumptions regard "social scientific knowledge as being derived from everyday concepts and meanings, from socially constructed mutual knowledge" (Blaikie, 2000: 116).

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[1] I am indebted to Professor Norman Blaikie for reading and editing this paper as well as giving me some very useful comments to further strengthen the draft of this paper.

[2] The method of abductive logic was originally used to generate hypotheses in the natural sciences (Peirce, 1931a, 1931b, 1934a, 1934b; Willer, 1967; Blaikie, 1993; 2007). However, it is now being used as a method of theory construction in interpretive social science (Blaikie, 2007: 88-89).

[3] See Blaikie (1993: 176-193), for a review of their ideas.

The features that make this research strategy distinctively different from other types of qualitative research are:

- "its view of the nature of social reality (ontology),
- the origin of answers to 'why' questions; and
- the manner in which those answers are obtained (epistemology)" (Blaikie, 2000: 116).

This research strategy is now elaborated in detail.

The ARS places a great deal of emphasis on the meanings and interpretations, the motives and intentions, that people use in their daily lives (including the meanings and interpretations people give to their action, other people's action, social situations, and natural and humanly created objects). This is because the social world is interpreted and experienced by social actors from the inside. People use the largely tacit, mutual knowledge, the symbolic meanings, motives and rules – which is here assumed to provide direction to their actions – to do what they do in daily life.

Mutual knowledge is the everyday beliefs and practices that are mundane and taken for-granted. In other words, it is background knowledge that is largely unarticulated. Therefore, people have to interpret their activities together in order for them to negotiate their way around their world and make sense of it. It is these meanings, embedded in language, that produce people's social reality. However, these subjective meanings are not private but are *intersubjective*, which people share together. People maintain these intersubjective realities through their ongoing interaction together (Blaikie, 2000: 115). Hence, social explanations need to go beyond the specific meanings that people give to their actions. This means that people need to deal with typical meanings produced by typical social actors, which involves the use of abstractions and approximations.

It is now clear that the social world is already defined and interpreted by social actors before the social scientist enters into their social life. "It is not some 'thing' that may be interpreted in different ways; it is those interpretations" (Blaikie, 2000: 116). Therefore, *social scientists* under this approach need to discover and describe this 'insider' view. They should not impose an 'outsider' view on it. It is this stock of knowledge and how it is produced and reproduced by social actors that *abductive researchers* need to grasp and articulate to provide an understanding of these actions.

In order to understand these meanings, *abductivists* must get into this world and learn the skills social actors use to construct and reconstruct their life. This process of construction involves people constantly reinterpreting their world. *Social scientists* must learn the language social actors use to describe and negotiate their way around their world for this is the only possible way to discover their social reality (Blaikie, 1993). Language here has to be seen not only as a system of signs or symbols "but as a medium of practical activity" (Giddens, 1976: 155). It has to be grasped as a skilled accomplishment of active human beings and must be studied from the 'inside'. Therefore, "generating descriptions of social conduct depends upon the hermeneutic task of penetrating the frames of meaning which lay actors themselves draw upon in constituting and reconstituting the social word" (Giddens, 1976: 155). In short, *social scientists* who wish to

understand social actors' lives have to use the same skills as social actors use to manage their everyday social lives (Giddens, 1976). This also means that the logic social scientists use to construct the ideal types is in line with the logic people use to create the typifications in daily life. However, the distinction is only the former are particular constructions, constructed with a certain purpose within certain purpose and aim in mind that have to adhere to the rule of science (Schütz, 1976).[4]

Hence, the interpretive social scientist has to begin by obtaining social actors' accounts of their actions and then has to generate social scientific accounts from them. The former is referred to as *first-level constructs* (everyday typifications) and the latter as *second-level constructs* (Schütz, 1963b). Social scientistst need to deal with typical meanings produced by typical social actors. It is from the process of moving from the first level of constructs to second level of constructs that the idea of abduction gains its meaning (Blaikie, 1993: 176). Whether or not second level constructs can be regarded as being superior to everyday accounts is a matter of dispute (see Blaikie 2010: 90-91).

The ARS is based on six principles.

1. *The basic access to any social world is the accounts that people can give of their own actions and the actions of others.*
2. *These accounts are provided to the social scientist in the language of the participants and contain the concepts that the participants use to structure their world, the meanings of these concepts, and the 'theories' that they use to account for what goes on.*
3. *However, much of the activity of social life is routine and is conducted in a taken-for-granted, unreflective manner.*
4. *It is only when enquiries are made about their behaviour by others (such as social scientists) or when social life is disrupted, and/or ceases to be predictable, that social actors are forced to consciously search for or construct meanings and interpretations.*
5. *Therefore, the social scientist may have to resort to procedures that encourage this reflection in order to discover the meanings and theories.*
6. *Ultimately, it is necessary to piece together the fragments of meaning that are available from their externalized products.* (Blaikie, 2010: 91-92)

ABDUCTIVE LOGIC OF GENERATING GROUNDED CONCEPTS

The ARS has suggested four stages to generate concepts, typologies or theories that are grounded in everyday activities, in the language and meanings of social actors (see Blaikie, 2000: 116-117).

1. Observe the activities of social actors that are related to the research problem and, then, try to elicit their accounts of these activities. This stage is satisfied through researchers

[4] See Ong (2005: 140-160) for a review of how social actors construct typification and social scientists construct ideal types.

immerging into the everyday social world of the people to grasp their socially constructed meanings;
2. Describe their activities and meanings (conceptualization and interpretations) closely to their everyday language (first-order concepts);
3. Find suitable second-order concepts (social scientific concepts or technical concepts) to capture the differences and similarities in these accounts; and
4. Derive social scientific accounts (descriptions and understanding) of the problem at hand.

While it is possible for different forms and levels of abstraction of theory to be generated from social actors' accounts, following the tradition established by Weber (1964), Schütz (1963a, 1963b, 1972, 1976) and Becker (1940, 1950), the ARS promotes the construction of ideal types or typologies (Blaikie, 2000: 181).

To practically accomplish these four stages, the ARS has further listed fourteen steps in generating typologies.

1. *Begin with a general formulation of the problem to be investigated.*

2. *Some relevant literature may be reviewed. However, relevance may be difficult to establish and the ideas may encourage prejudgements. Exploring the literature in parallel with the field work may be more appropriate, but the problem remains of what ideas might be borrowed or used to establish a typology.*

3. *Enter the social situation: set aside preconceptions and existing concepts and theories as far as possible; listen to what social actors are saying that seems to be related to the problem; and, be as non-directive as possible.*

4. *Identify the concepts which are used when 'the topic' is discussed, particularly those that keep recurring in conversation.*

5. *Explore the meaning of these concepts in as non-directive a manner as possible.*

6. *Refine and narrow the problem. This will continue throughout the study.*

7. *Select a few cases for intensive study over a lengthy period - at least six months. Become part of the social actors' world by regular involvement with them.*

8. *Record all comments and behaviour related to the focal concepts, plus anything else that seems to have a bearing on the problem.*

9. *Endeavour to identify any underlying themes. However, jumping to conclusions or imposing explanations should be avoided.*

10. *Test ideas that are identified in one case, with other cases.*

11. *Search the 'relevant' literature for ideas that might help to order the 'data'. Look for concepts that can capture fundamental differences between social actors' views or actions. Test their relevance and usefulness.*

12. *The emerging typology can be tested either by going back over recorded data to see if it helps to account for the social actors' behaviour, or by using the typology to predict particular social actor's behaviour and either waiting for an incidence of that behaviour to occur, or, if possible, setting up the conditions that should produce that behaviour.*

13. *Once the researcher is reasonably confident about the appropriateness of the typology, it should be translated into everyday language to see whether the social actors are prepared to accept it as an account of their and others' actions. If this is not the case, some revision will be required.*

14. *Test the typology in other contexts. This may involve further case studies or larger samples with more structured data collection techniques. If the social context and the purpose of the investigation are different from that of the original, modifications of the typology can be expected to be necessary. (Blaikie and Stacy, 1984:10-11)*

With two empirical examples, the use of abductive logic in generating grounded concepts or typologies is now illustrated.

ABDUCTIVE LOGIC AND TWO CASE STUDIES

Two empirical examples are employed here, *first*, a study of the experience of work of life insurance sales workers in Penang (Ong, 2005) and *second*, a study of the limitations of ageing (Stacy, 1983). The former will be discussed in detail and the latter will be illustrated only briefly.

EXAMPLE (1): THE EXPERIENCE OF WORK OF LIFE INSURANCE SALES WORKERS

The logic of abduction was used in a study of the experience of work of life insurance Chinese sales workers in Penang[5]. This approach to research was adopted because of the limited literature on sales workers and the methodological problems in previous research (for a review, see Ong, 2005). The research focused on the extent to which these sales workers experience work alienation, and job satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

The Methods

Fifty life insurance sales workers were selected and interviewed. This sample was selected through a combination of non-probability sampling methods, purposive sampling, snowball sampling and theoretical sampling. Data were collected by participant observation and,

[5] The study has actually covered the sample of electronics and life insurance Chinese sales workers in Penang. However, for the purpose of this paper, I have only focused on life insurance sales workers (for a detail, see Ong, 2005).

particularly, in-depth interviewing, over a period of twelve months. The interviews and field notes were analyzed with the help of Nvivo to establish categories, to locate patterns and to generate typologies of sales workers' experience of work.

Instead of following all the steps suggested by the ARS, this study only adhered to twelve of them as follows.

1 Start with a general formulation of the problem to be studied.
2 Relevant literature is reviewed even though its relevance is very hard to ascertain at that stage. Therefore, this task proceeded in parallel with the fieldwork.
3 Enter the social world with some sensitizing concepts as a guide but being as non-directive as possible.
4 Identify the concepts and categories that are used in the discussion of the 'topic', especially those that keep recurring in the conversations.
5 Explore the meaning of these concepts and categories. This continues throughout the study.
6 Refine and narrow the problem.
7 Become part of the social actors' world by regular involvement with them.
8 Record all comments and behaviour that have associations with the central concepts.
9 Test the concepts and categories that are identified in social actors with other social actors.
10 Search relevant literature for ideas about how the social actors' concepts and categories are used in social sciences. Check their relevance and usefulness.
11 This continues until typologies of social actors are established.
12 Present the typologies to the social actors to establish their validity.

Based on these twelve practical methods, three typologies of life insurance sales workers have been constructed. While this section discusses the practical procedures by which the typologies of life insurance sales workers were generated, the next subsection illustrates the typologies.

The detailed use of the twelve steps in ARS to generate typologies in the study is now illustrated.

1. *General formulation of the problem.* This research began with a general statement of the problem to be investigated: the experience of work of life insurance sales workers.

2. Relevant literature. Some relevant literature was reviewed in early stages, on work alienation, orientation to work, job satisfaction, and job stress. Included in this review were some theoretical perspectives, Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984) and the Social Construction of Reality Theory (Berger and Luckmann, 1972).[6] The literature was explored further, in parallel with fieldwork.

3. Entering the social situation. Even though some ideas were derived from the formulation of the problem and the literature review, the researcher endeavoured to set aside these ideas when he entered the social situations to interview the sales workers. This was important so as to avoid preconceptions and the imposition of existing concepts and theories. Therefore, at the stage of

[6] See Ong (2005: 90-107), for a review of these theoretical perspectives.

entering the social situation, the researcher tried to be as non-directive as possible while interviewing and observing the sales workers. This did not mean that the interviews were conducted without any guide. Some themes and concepts – such as 'experience of work', sales work, job satisfaction, stress, work alienation, work and job, work attitude or orientation, and work motivation – were used to initiate conversations with the sales workers to provide direction to the research. At the same time, the researcher also sought to discover other concepts used by sales workers that were roughly equivalent or different. The aim was to explore the meaning given by the sales workers to these concepts and themes if they used them.

Other than these themes and concepts, no theories or hypotheses were proposed at the beginning of the research. Models, in the form of ideal types, were to be developed to understand the experience of work of sales workers.

4. Identified the concepts and categories. By establishing a non-directive approach as illustrated above, the researcher tried to explore sales workers' stories of their experience of work. In the process, many concepts were identified that were used by the respondents when the topic was discussed. The researcher was particularly interested in those that kept recurring in the conversations. Concepts such as trust, relationship, friendship, professional, good character, luck and many others emerged as interview proceeded.

5. Explored the meaning of these concepts and categories. This stage of the research required an exploration of the meaning of the concepts that were derived from sales workers' conversations. This task continued throughout the study. The process involved learning to speak their language, learning their interests and their understanding of their worldviews and perspectives. It involved leaning their form of life (Winch, 1958: 55-57). It involved what Covey (1989) has called an empathic listening to the story of sales workers. According to this method of listening, one is required to seek to understand without critically trying to respond to respondents.

6. Refined and narrowed the problem. The scope of the study was narrowed through identifying the main categories and their properties. For example, the researcher had identified the concept of trust as a main category and relationship, good character, luck, and professional as its properties. This continued throughout the study.

7. Became part of the sales workers' world. The researcher became involved regularly in the work of sales workers in order to be part of their working world. For instance, the researcher followed the sales workers to work and helped them in their daily selling work. The researcher also mingled with sales workers and participated in sales workers' social activities. This participant observation in the sales workers' work and social activities helped the researcher to immerse himself in the form of life of the sales workers in order to learn the sales workers' worldview and experience of work. Through this kind of involvement, the researcher was able to observe and reflect on the differences between what the sales workers have shared and what they actually do in their work.

These regular involvements in the sales workers' work and social life were complemented by attendance at seminars and informal discussions held weekly by sales workers. The seminars and informal discussions are 'the weekly sharing meetings', 'the career talks', and 'the winner

nights'. At the weekly sharing meetings, sales workers discuss their daily problems. The career talks are seminars conducted for new workers to provide them with a better understanding of the prospects of sales work in life insurance. The winner nights are gatherings where sales workers' good performance is rewarded. Besides this, the researcher also read the annual meeting reports and training program manual.

8. Recorded all comments and behaviour that had associations with the central concepts. Under this step, the researcher was required to record ideas, comments, and behaviour related to the focal or main concepts that emerged from the interviews. This included anything that seemed to have a bearing on the sales workers' experience of work. This was done with the help of the memo writing facility in the NVivo software program.

9. Tested the concepts and categories. During the process of the interview, the researcher continued to check and confirm the categories and concepts that had been identified with particular sales worker, with other sales workers. This expanded the information about the concepts and the categories. Glaser and Strauss (1974) have called this way of checking and confirming the categories as the 'constant comparative method'.

10. Searched relevant literature for ideas to order concepts and categories. After the fieldwork proceeded for seven months, a search of relevant literature was conducted to see whether the concepts and categories had been used by social scientists, and, if so, in what ways. It was possible to compare the use of the concepts in the intellectual domain with the meaning defined by sales workers. This not only stimulated more questions to ask the sales workers but it also helped the researcher to identify the relevant literature for ideas that might help to order the data. Thus an ongoing dialogue between the first level constructs and sociological concepts was conducted. For instances, the work of Misztal (1996) and Gray (1998) provided some relevant ideas to help organize the sales workers' concepts and categories.

11. Typologies of sales workers were established. The above processes continued until all the categories and concepts identified from the sales workers had reached *theoretical saturation.* Saturation means "no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the category" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 61). Therefore, theoretical saturation occurs when no new categories emerge and new or relevant data can be dealt with within the existing categories. The researcher then started to build typologies from the sales workers' accounts.

12. Presented the typologies to sales workers to establish their validity. The typologies had to satisfy the *postulate of adequacy*. The construction of the typologies adhered to Schütz's argument that they should be *derived* from and *remain* consistent with lay concepts. The typologies were either presented verbally to the sales workers or they were allowed to read the types relevant to them. Their reactions were recorded. It is understood that member checks in this research are not only about checking the validity of the researcher's types (the second level constructs), thus ensuring that they fit with the respondents' understanding; but it was also done to check the first level constructs, in terms of the extent to which the researcher had fully grasped

them in the first place. During the period of 'member checking' further data were collected. This is similar with the use of the constant comparative method.[7]

Typologies of Life Insurance Sales Workers

The study of the experience of work of life insurance sales workers has provided a detail insight into the nature of work from workers' perspectives. Sales workers' descriptions of their work have been described in typologies. Three typologies – types of orientations to work, types of gaining trust or types of selling, and types of sales workers' motivation, have been constructed. These typologies were used to understand how life insurance sales workers experience work alienation, job satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

Types of orientation to work

Four types of insurance sales workers' orientations to work have identified and constructed. They are labelled as the 'instrumental', 'contributive', 'achievement/ego' and 'practical'. In the *instrumental* type, work is viewed as being a means to earn a better living. Workers are very satisfied with their work if they earn a great deal of income from their sales work. In this case, work only gives extrinsic satisfaction to sales workers. Besides instrumental meaning, work has no value in itself. These sales workers seek their fulfillment outside work, such as, achieving a high standard living.

In the *contributive* type, sales workers regard work as an activity in which they can contribute to other people's well being. These sales workers feel happy and satisfied with their work if they can help other people by having life insurance. Therefore, work provides intrinsic satisfaction to contributive-type sales workers because they see work as being an enriching experience.

Under the *achievement* or *ego* type, work is regarded as an activity in which sales workers can develop themselves. Achievement or ego-type sales workers share with the contributive-type sales workers the same ideas of the meaning of work, because they view work as being an enriching experience and as providing challenges that can develop them to fulfill themselves. However, in contrast to contributive-type sales workers, this meaning of work is restricted to what they can achieve for themselves, not for other people.

Similar to the instrumental-type sales workers, the *practical*-type sales workers regard work as a means to an end, a way of earning a living. However, in contrast to the instrumental-type sales workers, they regard work as earning enough money for their basic needs to survive in this world, to make a daily living. They are more interested in enjoying their lives through spending more time on their private life.

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[7] The difference between the constant comparative method and member checks in this case is that the former happened in the initial stage of interviewing the sales people to develop the first level constructs, while the latter occurred at the stage after the second level constructs have been established (Silverman, 2001). Therefore, they are different merely because they were conducted with different purposes in mind and in different contexts.

Types of Gaining Trust

The concept of trust was identified to be an important category in understanding sales work. Trust is regarded as being the prospects' or customers' belief in the reliability or trustworthiness of sales workers. It is based on their *good character*, *relationship* quality and *professional* ability. It is a subjective feeling that depends on the perceptions and experiences prospects or customers have of a sales worker. For sales workers, selling life insurance is a process in which they relate to and interact with their prospects by creating a good impression in order to gain prospects' trust in them. It is similar to people acting in everyday social life to gain social trust to satisfy their social goals. However, the difference is that life insurance sales workers do it in a more self-conscious and reflexive way to gain their prospects' trust. As fieldwork advanced, four types of gaining trust as selling strategies were identified and constructed. The types are *relationship* type, *luck* type, *good characteristics* type, and *professional* type.

(a) Relationship Type of Gaining Trust

In *relationship* type, sales workers endeavour to first establish a friendship relationship with the aim of gaining their prospects' sincere trust. Hence, prospects buy to support a close friendship. The process that leads to close friendship occurs in stages. It begins with *cold calling* and then leads up to follow-*up*, *acceptance* and *closing* stages. These four stages are also called *attraction*, *uncertainty*, *exclusive* and *intimacy* stages.

The *cold-calling* or *attraction* stage begins with sales workers trying to relate to and interact with their prospects. This stage involves telephoning and knocking on strangers' doors to sell life insurance policies. A good first impression is, therefore, very crucial if an interview is going to occur. Some serious attitudes presented through formal clothes and friendly are necessary. While sales workers' focus at this stage is to develop friendship with prospects, they are still perceived as sales workers whose motive is clear, to make a sale. It is, therefore, necessary to show sales workers' honesty and sincerity with regard to their motives. Showing some understanding (empathetic interaction) has to be shown simultaneously. This type of talk means that sales workers speak a language that seeks to understand other people from their perspective. Thus, sales workers usually have to spend a great deal of their time listening to their prospects.

At the *follow-up* stage, sales workers desire to further develop their friendship relationship and start to pay more visits to their prospect. This results in prospects feeling irritated and uncomfortable and they may try to avoid sales workers. As a result, sales workers experience difficulties in pursuing prospects to develop friendship relationship. Therefore, they have to be ready to put on their 'thick faces' to handling their prospects' negative conduct. Nevertheless, they usually look for opportunities to help prospects with personal things through which they have the chance to be with their prospects and they can increase their knowledge of each other by learning to do things together. As a result, friendship trust slowly develops between sales workers and prospects.

At the *acceptance* stage, sales worker are regarded as friends by prospects. For the first time, sales workers can freely visit prospects and they are usually comfortable being together. Sales

workers' visits and help are expected by prospects as desirable. When opportunities arise, sales workers are not hesitant to ask their prospects to buy from them, which they do because of the friendship connection.

The c*losing* or *intimacy* is the stage in which sales workers and their prospects enjoy a very close friendship relationship. Prospects are usually motivated to buy from sales workers they have already accepted as a member of their family. Having such close relationship with customers ensures continuous business. It is, therefore, no surprise that such customers introduce more prospects to sales workers. This is the stage in which sales workers make a great deal of sales.

(b) Luck Type of Gaining Trust

In the luck type, sales workers look for prospects who can trust them as what they are. According to the luck type, people can trust and get along well with each because they have similar personalities and a way of life. In this case, sales workers believe they can sell to people who trust them naturally. In contrast to the sales workers in the relationship type, these sales workers can behave naturally in doing their work. Meeting more people is the only practical way to identify prospects with whom they share a common way of life. When they have found suitable prospects, they will pursue and persuade them to buy life insurance. It is, therefore, a matter of luck for sales workers to meet people who can trust them naturally. To increase this luck, sales workers usually commit themselves to 'the logic of the number game'. They aim to meet ten prospects a day and expect to interview three of them. However, a sales worker' minimum hope is that one of the three can trust them sufficiently to buy. This method motivates sales workers to work hard and achieves good results.

(c) Good Character Type of Gaining Trust

Under the good character type, sales workers gain prospects' or customers' trust through presenting themselves as having a good character, as being sincere, honest, helpful, courteous, responsible, trustworthy and reliable. Having a good character is, in fact, essential when people desire to gain meaningful and lasting support from other people to achieve their social goals in life. The extent to which sales workers are able to gain prospects' trust is largely dependent on whether they can manage to convince their prospects that they are reliable and trustworthy. Some kind of impression management is clearly involved. Sales workers whose character is naturally good have little trouble gaining this type of trust. However, those sales workers whose character is naturally unreliable, have to work very hard over time, and in various ways, to convince their prospects that they are trustworthy persons; or that they have already changed to be a more reliable and responsible person.

(d) Professional Type of Gaining Trust

Under the professional type, sales workers believe selling life insurance is a professional job that needs special training and skill. Prospects are expected to trust them because of their profound

life insurance knowledge, skills and ability to serve prospects well. Sales workers, therefore, focus on their professionalism to gain people's trust. To achieve this, sales workers try to create prospects' need for life insurance through getting the prospects to understand the concept of life insurance and then to relate this specifically to their lives. This is usually done in a very rational way that is based on the use of facts, figures, and logical arguments. For example, this selling strategy starts with professional sales workers approaching their prospects through cold calling (strangers) or natural markets (relatives and friends or business associations). Sales workers then introduce themselves in a friendly manner and request time to present the concept of life insurance. In the beginning, the presentation is usually very general. However, it then becomes more specific to the life of their prospects in order to demonstrate the importance of life insurance directly to them. The process entails sales workers asking certain standard and appropriate questions, which then direct their prospects' answers. Usually, the standard questions are based on the prospects' income, job, education and age. In this way, sales workers are able to control the conversation. Knowing many facts about their prospects is very important for them to be able to influence their prospects in viewing and understanding the importance of life insurance. While it is the skills and knowledgeability of professional sales workers that convince people to trust them and to buy life insurance, the expensive clothing and car usually confirm and legitimate this trust.

Types of Work Motivation

Sales workers refer to the term motivation as needs, desires and expectations that drive them to work hard in their work. They also refer it to as the process of how these energies (the need, desires, and expectations) drive sales workers to work diligently to achieve something they expect. It is also involved in how their behaviour is maintained or sustained. In the context of motivation, sales workers use the concepts of responsibility, achievement, goal setting, job accomplishment, positive thinking, self-development, group spirit and environment. Seven types of work motivation have been identified and constructed: *responsibility* or *money* type; *achievement* type; *goal-setting* type, *job accomplishment* type; *positive thinking* type; *self-development* type; and *environment* type.

Under *responsibility* or *money* type, sales workers are able to remain motivated to do their work because of a sense of responsibility to provide a good and comfortable living for themselves and their family members, such as house, car, and children's education. This motivates them to work hard to earn money as obtaining this quality of life is very costly. Because of this, these sales workers always refer to money as being their motivation.

The *achievement* type highlights the desire or need to achieve something in work as the basis for a sales worker to continue to work daily. The desire to achieve something is concerned with wanting to become somebody in or through the world of work. This type of motivation is very prevalent among educated sales workers.

The *goal-setting* type has a connection with the achievement type. For people to make use of their desire to achieve something, which is the key idea of the achievement type, requires them to identify and specify their goals clearly. Having certain clear goals in life or work can motivate people. Once people have achieved their goals, their lives will be more meaningful. Sales

workers' goals in life are usually having a car, a nice house, and a wife and children in their lives. This motivates them to work hard. In the world of work, sales workers' goals are to achieve sales targets, be higher achievers in sales, and be in the best sales group. However, goals have to be achievable. While the nature of sales workers' goals in social life can change from time to time in line with sales workers' needs, their goals in work are more consistent. Therefore, having these goals motivates these sales workers to perform well in their work.

In the *job accomplishment* type, sales workers are motivated by being able to complete their work. However, sales workers differ in how they view complete work. Sales workers who regard a piece of completed work as being making a sale, tend to feel motivated to do their work whenever they make a sale. However, sales workers who associate it with finishing any piece of their daily work, tend to feel motivated daily even they do not make a sale. Most of the time, the process of selling takes a period of time, in which sales workers try to identify, approach and persuade their prospects or customers to buy from them. Therefore, the latter type of motivation tends to be more effective than the completed sales type.

Under the positive *thinking* type, sales workers adopt a positive thinking approach on whatever happens to them on a daily basis, particularly rejection by prospects or customers. Positive thinking generates a good feeling towards their daily work, which, in turn, can motivate them not only to continue working but also to work hard. One of the positive ways of looking at work is to focus on the results perspective rather than the failure perspective.

The *self-development* type is based on the logic that people will feel motivated to work when they know their work is enhancing and developing themselves. They view their work as learning, and learning for them is a fun activity as it develops their knowledge and awareness. Because daily sales work is naturally not routine, when compared with office work, sales workers have many opportunities to learn and develop themselves every day. This challenges sales workers' ability to handle their work. They feel excited and motivated to work hard and to stay focused on their work.

According to the *environment* type, sales workers are motivated to work hard as a result of their positive and conducive work environment. The important aspects of the work environment are motivational songs and books, and group culture. In life insurance, motivational songs are routinely played during group discussions, meeting and seminars, particularly at the time before the gatherings start and after they end, to produce good feelings among sales workers. Furthermore, when sales workers sing in groups they have a sense of togetherness in doing their work, and this encourages them to work hard. Sales workers' regular read motivational books, which keeps them positive about their work and supports this healthy environment. In addition, these life insurance sales workers have a high group spirit that provides support and makes sure that they are successful in their work. This form of healthy group culture attracts and motivates workers to work hard. These sales workers are externally motivated to view their work positively.

Reaction to the Types

The types of orientations to work, gaining trust, and work motivation were presented to fifty sales workers to see if the type related well to their working reality. This process is referred to as the *postulate of adequacy* (Schütz, 1963a: 247; 1963b: 343) or 'member checks' in ethnomethodology. Life insurance sales workers confirmed the types, with some practical variations. With regard to the types of gaining prospects' or customers' trust, for example, sales workers have provided their responses in three ways: they

- use different strategies at different sales levels;
- use different strategies in different situations; and
- consistently adopt a specific strategy.

The *first* response, which was provided by twenty sales workers, is based on that idea that sales workers' level determines the strategies they use to gain their prospects' or customers trust. There are three levels in life insurance: Sales Agent (first level), Unit Sales Manager (second level) and Group Sales Manager (third or top level). According to sales workers, the luck type is used at the first level. As sales workers move up to the Unit Sales Manager level, they use the relationship and good character strategies. When they move to Group Sales Manager level, they then use the professional strategy.

The *second* way of using the types is provided by seventeen sales workers whose sales levels are: Sales agent (four male respondents); Unit Sales Manager (seven male respondents); and Group Sales Manager (six male respondents). These sales workers take into account the kind of prospects or customers they face in determining the kind of strategies they need to use to gain trust. However, it is possible for sales workers to change from one way of gaining trust to another within just one encounter with a prospect or customer as a result of situational pressures.

Thirteen sales workers provided the *third* response. These sales workers are: Sales Agent (two male respondents and one female respondent); Unit Sales Manger (eight male respondents); and Group Sales Manager (two male respondents). These sales workers use a specific strategy that is consistently based on their preferences and view of social reality. For instance, six respondents (three sales agents, one unit sales manager, and two group sales managers) consistently use the relationship strategy, while four of the other respondents (unit sales managers) use the professional strategy and three (unit sales manager) use the good character strategy.

Sales workers confirmed that they could identify with the type of work orientation, and the types of motivation in which they had been placed. Both sales workers' work orientation and motivation are interrelated and influence each other. Sales workers can begin with any kind of work orientation and work motivation, although an instrumental work orientation and the money type of motivation are common (see Ong, 2005). However, when the sales workers are in the actual work situation, their work motivation tends to be dominated by the one that comes from the nature of the sales work – such as *goal-setting*, *achievement*, *job accomplishment*, *positive thinking*, and *self-development* types. This affects their work orientation as well. Sales workers' orientation tends to change in time to the practical and the contribution types.

EXAMPLE (2): THE LIMITATIONS OF AGEING[8]

Fourteen methods, as suggested by the ARS, were fully employed in a study of the limitations of ageing (Stacy, 1983). This study was concerned with aspects that affect the kind and quality of care older people receive when they experience the limitations of ageing (Blaikie 2007: 97). Instead of a point-to-point illustration of the abductive steps used, as the first example has demonstrated, it is sufficient, for the purpose of this paper, to briefly elucidate how the typologies of limitation of aging were constructed.

Stacy (1983) conducted this study in *two* stages. While the *first* stage concentrated on seven two-generation families that witnessed family members going through the experience of making decisions about a member of the older generation, the *second* involved trying out the typologies constructed earlier with a larger group (219 case studies of older people) though with a different purpose in mind.

Some ethnographic methods of collecting data, such as in-depth interviewing and participant observation, were used to collect the data, over a period of twenty-four months for the first stage and twelve for the second (Blaikie and Stacy, 1984: 11). For example, individual family members were thoroughly interviewed, and family gatherings attended, to get first hand experiences, which then were followed up with informal visits to get insightful understandings of the issues raised earlier.

At the *first stage*, Stacy spent more time with the members of the older generations than other family members. She discovered that family members used concepts, such as 'independence', 'sickness' and 'responsibility' regularly when they talked about the issue of decision-making. "A range of meanings of these concepts was found both within and between families" (Blaikie, 2007: 97). In addition to this, the researcher also placed a great deal of attention on how the older members related themselves with the rest of their family.

After several months of collecting the data, Stacy wrote up them as descriptive case studies, and relevant sociological literature was then consulted for ideas that could help to order the data. In short, the researchers conducted a dialogue between first-order concepts and sociological concepts to find appropriate second-order concepts.

During this dialogue, it was empirically clear that differences between families concentrated on two processes:

- giving and receiving, and
- decision-making.

The second-order concepts of 'obligations', 'reciprocity' and 'rights' were reviewed and proven to be relevant and useful to understand the first process. The second process happened "when an actual or potential change in the older person's situation was recognized and someone felt that a decision needed to be made" (Blaikie, 2007: 97). Differences were noted in:

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[8] While the illustration of this example is largely based on the summary made by Blaikie (2007: 97-99), a detailed description of it can be read in Blaikie and Stacy (1984) and, a full version of this study is available in Stacy (1983).

- whether change was perceived as temporary or permanent,
- who took the effort to find out the need for a decision to be made,
- how others reacted to this,
- who made the decision, and
- whether the decision-maker took others into consideration.

It was discovered that the various meanings of the three first-order concepts could be included in these two processes.

Two typologies – one was concerned with *family relationships*, the other with the older person's *worldview* – were eventually developed. Under the first typology, three types of family relationships were constructed:

- 'independent',
- 'dependent' and
- 'reciprocal'

The first type describes the older people make decisions on their own and they only expect their family members to guide them without interference. In the 'dependent' type, the older people rely on their family members' effort to find out problems and make decisions about them. The 'reciprocal' families demonstrate the older people work together with their family members to find suitable alternatives and both parties are ready to compromise with each other if necessary.

Three types of worldviews have been found to be among the old people:

- 'progressing through'.
- 'present living' and
- 'accumulated experience'.

The 'progressing through' type of old people view the past, present and future as being decided or planned in advance by God or by fate and that human cannot change it. In short, they believe predestination. Therefore, these older people prefer to keep their values and to attach themselves close to physical surroundings. They ignore the pursuit of goals. It is within this environment, and based on their own terms, that the older person relates to people and events.

The 'present living' type of old person's life relates mostly with people whom they happen to be associated with at any time. They are flexible about their physical environment and other people's expectations. Because they live in present time and derive meanings from it that they view the past and the future have little significance or no meaning.

The world of 'accumulated experience' type of old person, which includes both people and physical environments, sees the older person pursuing goals and believing they have exerted some influence on their past and believe they can influence their future. Hence, they obtain meanings from social talking and achieving goals.

The three types of family relationships – 'independent', 'dependent' and 'reciprocal' – were found to be related with these three types of worldviews – 'progressing through', 'present living' and 'accumulated experience' – respectively.

Typologies were constructed through a series of dialogues:

- between the researcher and research participants;
- between first-level constructs and the theoretical and research literature;
- between the products of the first two dialogues and the emerging of typologies; and
- between the researchers and colleagues and/or supervisor (s).

The aim of this iterative and time-consuming process was to produce "a clustering amongst observed personal and/or social activities and characteristics, without, initially, having any idea of what the finished product will look like. The process was one of observation and active participation, accumulating information, reflecting on this, and testing ideas" (Blaikie, 2007: 98).

The development of these types engaged the constant check between the between the first-order concepts and the emerging second-order concepts by relating the latter back to the accumulated information in the field notes and memo, and also referring them again to the old people for reactions. "[T]he old people found the types relevant to their situation both acceptable and meaningful. It was possible to locate all older people and their families" (Blaikie, 2007: 98).

In the *second stage* of the research, Stacy tried out these typologies with bigger group – 219 case studies of older people – with the aim of understanding "how interaction with members of health and welfare agencies influences the kind and quality of care that older people receive" (Blaikie, 2007: 98). By temporarily putting aside the earlier typologies, more concepts of the first order emerged and this required a great deal of work on the literature. As a result, four types of older people were constructed:

- the 'controlling',
- 'striving',
- 'responding', and
- 'negotiating' types.

Each of these types was described in terms of:

- major identifying characteristics,
- types of social relationships,
- conceptions of time and space,
- purpose in life,
- sources of rewards,
- views of possible alternatives and futures, and
- responses to the limitations of ageing (Blaikie, 2007: 99).[9]

[9] For a full description of the types, please refer to Stacy (1983: 164-70).

When the types were referred back to the older people for confirmation, only thirteen of the cases could not readily be located in one of the types (see Blaikie, 2007: 99; Stacy, 1983).

In addition, Stacy (1983) also focused on a sample of health and welfare professionals in community, with the aim of understanding the orientations of the professionals have towards the older people with whom they worked. As a result, she developed a second typology. Using the same process as in the earlier stage, two types were then identified and constructed:

- the 'looking after' and
- the 'enabling' types.

The 'looking after' type of professional can be succinctly described as the belief of the health professionals that older people deserve good physical care and this care should be determined entirely by the health and welfare professionals who know what is the best. Therefore, they expect older people to be more acceptant and thankful for the assistance given. However, the enabling' professional believes that older people should given help programmes in the ways that enable them to be independent, active and be responsible.

As the two constructed typologies developed in the second stage were related, it was possible to "predict the likely outcome when carers of either type work with older people of different types" (Blaikie, 2007: 99).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Through the use of two empirical examples, this paper has demonstrated how the ARS was used to generate grounded concepts or constructed typologies. While it is important to note some of the crucial elements of ARS in this process, it is necessary, first, to recapitulate what has been discussed in this paper.

ARS is a research strategy developed by Blaikie (1993, 2000, 2007, 2010), which refers to the process of generating social scientific descriptions and explanations from the way social actors describe their way of life. The aim of this research strategy is to "construct descriptions and explanations that are grounded in the everyday activities of, as well as in the language and meanings used by, social actors' (Blaikie, 2004: 1). In order to achieve this, the ARS involves four stages and fourteen practical procedures.

This paper used a study of the experience of work of life insurance sales workers in Penang (Ong, 2005) and a study of the limitations of ageing in Australia (Stacy, 1983) as two empirical examples to demonstrate the use of the abductive logic to generate grounded concepts or typologies. While the illustration of the former stressed the practical procedures as suggested by the ARS, the latter emphasized the generation of grounded concepts or typologies. The typologies generated in both examples were very useful for understanding the problem at hand of each study.

Based on the illustrations of the two examples, it is vital to make *two* important remarks of the elements of ARS. *First*, as far as the generation of grounded concepts or typologies is concerned, the ARS clearly stresses the importance of getting as close as possible the meanings and interpretations constructed by social actors. In both examples, for instance, it is clearly noticed that the researchers have seriously immerged themselves in the form of life of their respondents in order to "know how to find one's way about in it, to be able to participate in it as an ensemble of practices" (Giddens, 1976: 161). In addition, both examples have indicated that the process by which respondents' accounts are carefully constructed, certain steps, such as 'member checking' (Garfinkel, 1967) or using the 'postulate of adequacy' (Schutz, 1963a), were employed to ensure the researchers' accounts were not too far away from the respondents' accounts. *Second*, the ARS is insistent that the scientific accounts, at least initially, be derived from and remain consistent with lay language. That is why both researchers in the examples were sympathetic to the scientific accounts that derive and remain consistent with lay language. These two key features of the ARS have actually distinguished this research strategy from other types of qualitative research, such as Grounded Theory (see Ong, 2009).

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